

Press Release

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Rail organisations opposed to cross-border use of ‘megatrucks’

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the Association of the European Rail Industry (UNIFE), have expressed their opposition to the new proposal to formalise the cross-border use of longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs, or ‘megatrucks’) between neighbouring countries. The new proposal from the European Commission to revise Directive 1996/53 published today (Monday 15 April), will allow vehicles which exceed the current European truck limits of 40 tonnes (44 tonnes if part of combined transport) and 18.75m in length to cross borders between countries if both countries agree.

The rail sector remains opposed to the concept of cross-border use of megatrucks, believing that their use in this way will start a process that will inevitably lead to a ‘domino effect’ and in time their general use across Europe. Furthermore, this approach is contrary to the Commission’s own agenda for modal shift from road to rail transport, most recently set out in the 2011 Transport White Paper which stated a goal of shifting 30% of road freight to rail and inland waterways by 2030 as part of the long-term move to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport.

The rail sector also believes that pressure from supporters of megatrucks to accommodate their wider use ignores the huge investment in infrastructure that would be necessary even though it would benefit of only a small number of road users.

CER and UNIFE are also particularly concerned by the way this change of policy has been proposed without an impact assessment on its implications. Studies undertaken for the rail sector have shown that the wider use of megatrucks will undermine the viability of rail freight in many areas, in particular single wagonload freight.

CER Executive Director Libor Lochman said, *“The greater use of megatrucks goes against what the Commission is trying to achieve in freight transport. If it wants to reduce the environmental impact of transport, it should be helping to further invest in rail and not just allowing ever-longer trucks to cross Europe.”*

UNIFE Director General Philippe Citroën stated, *“Despite low public approval of megatrucks, there is a clear danger of EU-wide circulation of megatrucks if this proposal is accepted. This approach will be very difficult to reverse once countries start adopting it. On the contrary, modal shift towards environmentally friendly transport modes like rail is the way forward. In this respect, we are keen to implement the objectives set in the 2011 Transport White Paper.”*



*The Voice
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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together 80 European railway undertakings and infrastructure companies. CER represents the interests of its members towards the European institutions as well as other policy makers and transport actors. CER's main focus is promoting the strengthening of rail as essential to the creation of a sustainable transport system which is efficient, effective and environmentally sound. For more information, see www.cer.be

UNIFE represents the European Rail Industry in Brussels since 1992. The Association gathers more than 80 of Europe's leading large and medium-sized rail supply companies active in the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. A further one thousand suppliers of railway equipment partake in UNIFE activities through 16 national rail industry associations. UNIFE members have an 80% market share in Europe and supply more than 50% of the worldwide production of rail equipment and services. For more information, see www.unife.org